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912 Civilians Killed in September 2017

Syrian-Russian Alliance Kills More
Civilians than any other Party

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, October 2, 2017

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



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I. Introduction and Methodology

The report includes only the death toll of civilians that were killed by the main seven influential parties in Syria:

- Syrian regime forces (army, Security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)
- Russian forces
- Self-management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party forces, a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)
- Extremist Islamic groups
- Armed opposition factions
- International coalition forces
- Other parties

The fourth round of negotiations was held in Astana city, Kazakhstan's capital, on 3 and 4 of May 2017. Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives attended as the sponsoring states of Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. The three states agreed on establishing four de-escalation zones, wherein the agreement is to commence on May 6, 2017. The agreement outlined four major areas for the de-escalation – Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and al Quneitra governorates in the southern parts of Syria. It was provided that a special committee would accurately assign the borders of said zones at a later date. The agreement provided for a cessation of combat operations, passage of humanitarian aids, and for IDPs to go back to their areas.



Following an extensive round of talks between Russia, USA, and Jordan that commenced in May 2017 in Amman, Jordan's capital, the American and Russian presidents announced, on the sidelines of the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, that a ceasefire agreement has been reached in southwestern Syria – Daraa, Quneitra, and Suwayda governorates. The agreement went into force at 12:00 on Sunday July 9, 2017, and provided for the passage of humanitarian aids in addition to a ceasefire between the conflicting parties (Syrian regime forces and their allies on one side, and factions from the armed opposition on the other side). Also, the agreement specifies that maintaining security in this region is the Russian forces' responsibility in coordination with the Americans and Jordanians.

In addition, there have been a number of other local agreements in July and August 2017, such as Eastern Ghouta agreement between armed opposition factions, on one side, and officials from the Russian side, while a similar agreement was struck with the opposition in northern suburbs of Homs. However, the texts of these agreements haven't been made public on Russian government's websites, and the same for armed opposition factions who didn't publicize these agreements, except for Failaq al Rahman who published the text of the agreement on their official website. At the end of the agreement, according to the copy on Failaq al Rahman's website, a signature by a Russian sponsor was shown but without an explicit name, which was a grave mistake, as apparently all of this helps the sponsoring Russian side to easily dissolve from these agreements with no subsequent political or legal obligations and repercussions.

On Saturday, July 22, 2017, Russian Ministry of Defense announced that a de-escalation agreement has been signed in Eastern Ghouta following a round of talks between Russian military officials, on one side, and Jaish al Islam faction, on the other side, in Egypt's capital Cairo. The agreement was to come into effect at 12:00 of the same day. On Wednesday, August 16, 2017, a Failaq al Rahman representative and a Russian representative signed an agreement in Geneva city that established Failaq al Rahman's inclusion in the de-escalation zone in Eastern Ghouta. The agreement was to come into effect at 21:00 of Friday, August 18, 2017.

On Monday, July 31, 2017, another de-escalation agreement was signed in Egypt's capital Cairo for northern Homs suburbs and southern Hama suburbs following a round of talks between armed opposition factions in the area and the Syrian regime represented by the Russian government as a sponsoring party, as the agreement was to commence at 12:00 on Thursday, August 3, 2017. Following the agreement's commencement, two meetings



were held between a committee representing the military and civilian activities in northern suburbs of Homs and southern suburbs of Hama, on one side, and a Russian representative, on the other side, in a tent that was built for the meeting in a neutral area - near the al Dar al Kabira crossing in al Dar al Kabira village, northern suburbs of Homs governorate. The meeting was held to further discuss the provisions of Cairo's de-escalation agreement, as some armed opposition factions weren't fully in agreement with the de-escalation.

Most notably, the two most recent agreements provided for a full cessation of hostilities between the conflicting parties in the relevant areas -with the exclusion of the areas in which ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham are present- and for humanitarian aids to enter these areas and for detainees to be released as per the demands of each party as to which detainees are to be released.

Since the agreements' commencement in the included areas, we have noticed a relatively good drop in the rates of killing in relation to the past months since March 2011.

We noticed that these agreements reflected on the civilians' lives in most of the areas that were included in the agreements, as patients were able to go to hospitals and medical points, and many children went back to school after their families prevented them out of fear for their lives in light of the repeated bombing that targeted schools, as well as hospitals. Markets became more active, and many infrastructure services were restored thanks to a number of maintenance campaigns. Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the sponsoring parties- won't see are still going on as nothing had happened.

With the end of the sixth round of talks in the Kazakhstani capital, Astana, which were held over the course of two days (September 14-15, 2017), a de-escalation zone was established in Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas, as military forces were to be deployed (Russian, Turkish, and Iranian) to monitor the agreement, with the passage of humanitarian aids.



On September 19, Syrian-Russian alliance started a heavy offensive against Idlib governorate in response to Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's "Ya Ebadallah Uthbotou" battle. Supported by some opposition faction (The Islamic Turkistani Party, Jaish al Izza, and Jaish al Nukhba), Hay'at Tahrir al Sham started this battle in northeastern Hama governorate, as they took over some villages, but Syrian regime forces, backed by Russian forces, managed to re-seize the same areas on the same day. We have released [a report](#) documenting the most notable violations of the first week of that offensive. Subsequently, these forces expanded the offensive to include the suburbs of Aleppo and Hama governorates and Eastern Ghouta in Damascus suburbs.

We have noticed a rise in the numbers of civilian victims killed by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces to a rate that haven't been recorded since the de-escalation agreement went into effect on May 6, 2017, as Syrian regime forces topped all other parties in terms of killing civilians in September, followed by Russian forces. On the other hand, international coalition's death toll dropped to less than its half levels in last August. The Russian sponsor should commit to the negotiations and apply pressure on its Syrian and Iranian allies to cease all forms of killing, bombing, and torture to death inside detention centers. Also, detainees should be released, as this case hasn't seen any mentionable progress at all.

We, at SNHR, hope that the de-escalation zones agreements see a good commitment, so it becomes a stronger foundation on which a political process would be built that would fulfil justice for the victims, and hold all the perpetrators accountable for their violations; most pressingly the party that was primarily responsible for the dire situation that Syria have come into: the current ruling regime who has perpetrated roughly 90% of all violations against the Syrian people.

Methodology

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is an independent human rights organization that is not affiliate of any political or partisan side. SNHR works on documenting human rights violations by the seven main parties in Syria.

We have been able to document the civilian victims who are being killed by the parties to the conflict to a great extent, whereas armed victims are divided into two categories: Victims from the armed opposition: We face additional difficulties as many of those victims are killed on battlefronts and not inside cities. Also, we aren't able to obtain details such as names, pictures and other important details on account of the armed opposition forces' unwillingness to reveal such information for security concerns among other reasons. Therefore, the actual number of victims is much greater than what is being recorded.



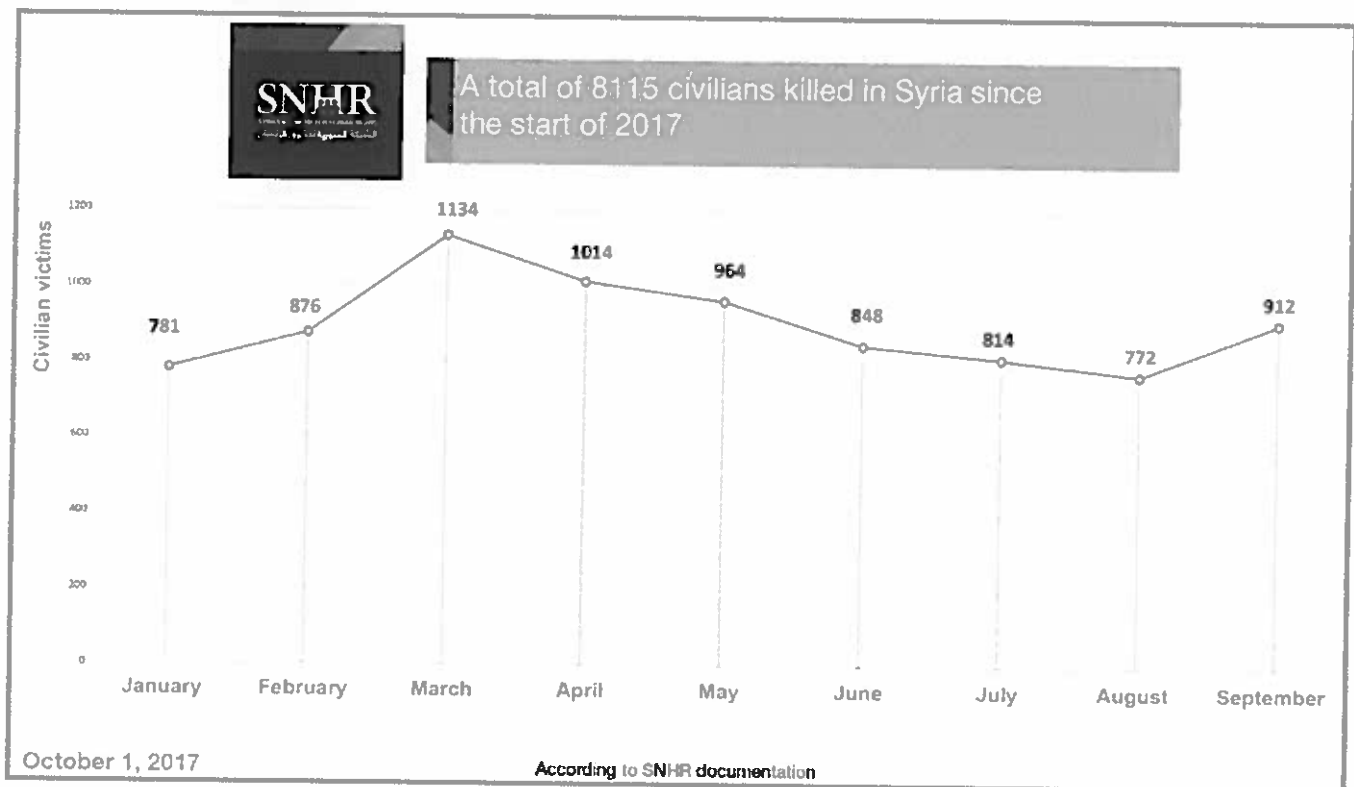
Victims from Syrian regime forces and ISIS: It is almost impossible to access information about this kind of victims and the margin of error is considerably higher due to the lack of any applicable methodology in this type of documentation. The Syrian government and ISIS don't publish, reveal, or record their victims. From our perspective, the statistics published by some groups on this category of victims are fictitious and are not based on any actual data. Therefore, we are only going to include civilian victims who were killed by all parties and compare them

Please see SNHR methodology in documenting victims:

II. Details

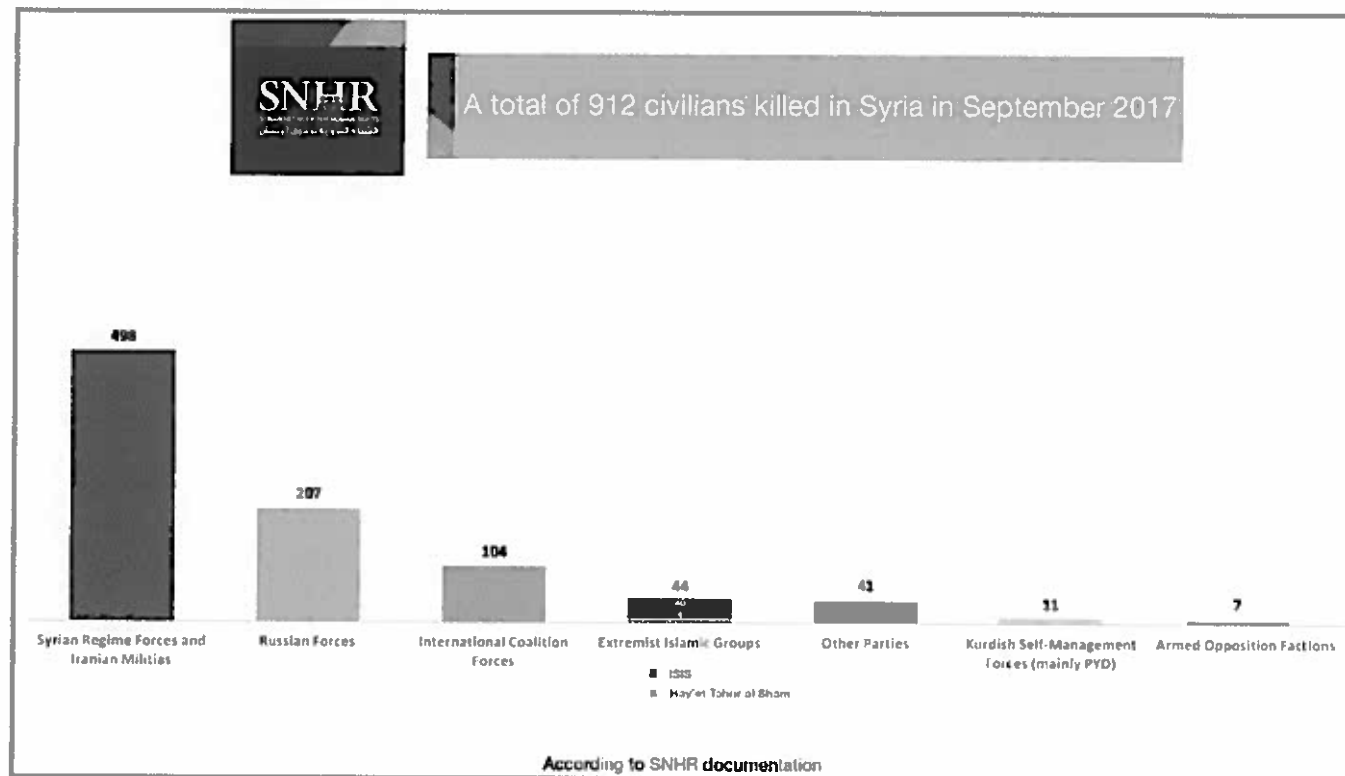
A. Civilian death toll in 2017

SNHR has documented the killing of 8,115 civilians at the hands of parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2017 and October of the same year



B. Death toll in September 2017

SNHR has documented the killing of 912 civilians in the month of September 2017 at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria

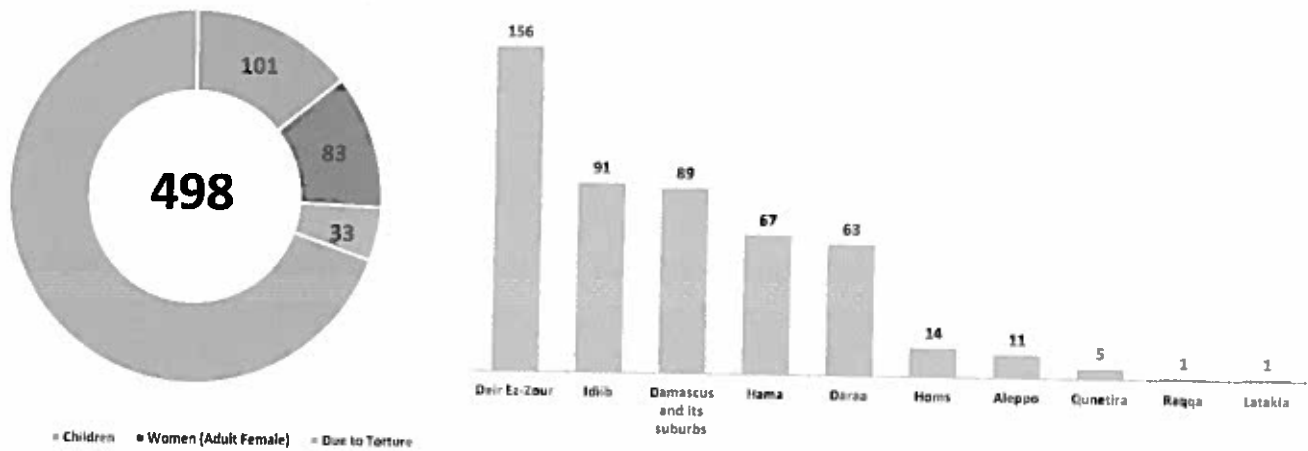


Death toll is distributed by the parties to the conflict as follows:

A. Syrian regime forces

SNHR has documented the killing of 498 civilians at the hands of Syrian regime forces, including 101 children (four children are killed every day on average) and 83 women (adult female). Additionally, among the victims were 33 civilians who died due to torture, including two women.

Death toll is distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



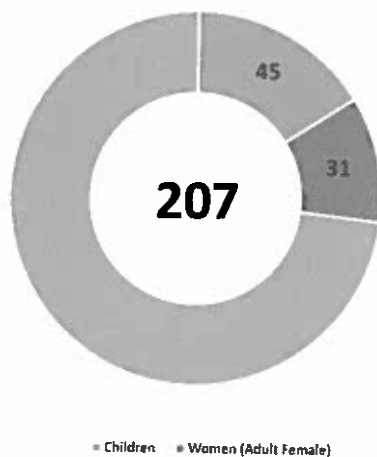
B. Russian forces

We recorded the killing of 207 civilians, including 45 children and 31 women, in bombardment operations we believe were Russian. The death toll is distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:

Idlib: 128

Deir Ez-Zour: 62

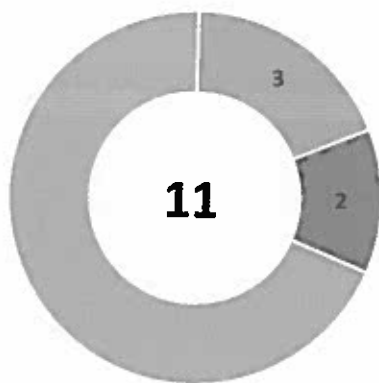
Aleppo: 17



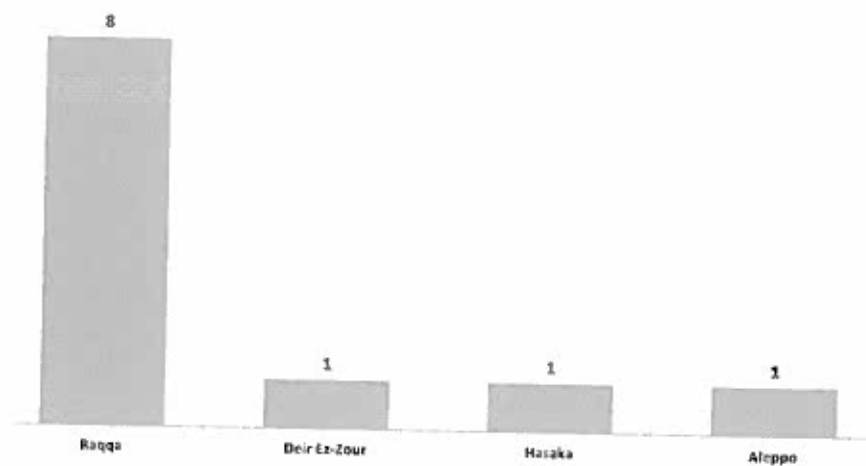
C. Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Killed 11 civilians, including three children and two women.

Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:



■ Children ■ Women (Adult Female)

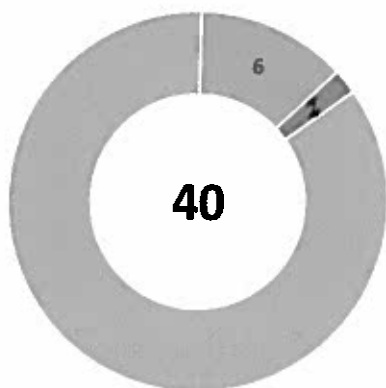


D. Extremist Islamic groups:

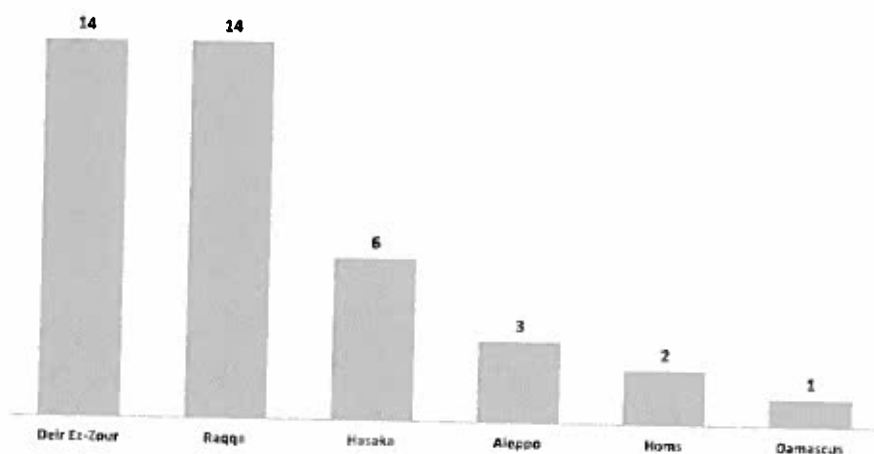
killed 44 civilians, including six children and one woman. Additionally, among the victims was one who died due to torture. Death toll is distributed as follows:

- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): killed 40 civilians, including six children and one woman.

Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:

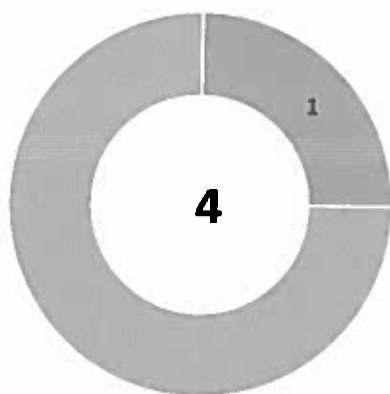


■ Children ■ Women (Adult Female)



- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance that is composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of armed opposition factoins): killed four civilians, including one victim who died due to torture. Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:

Idlib: 3, Aleppo: 1

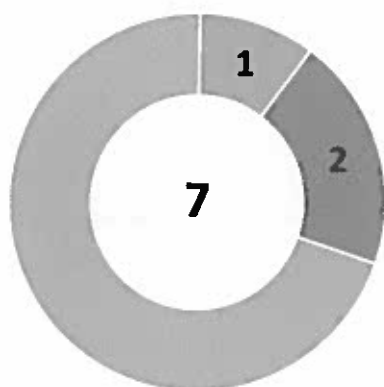


■ Due to Torture

E. Armed opposition factions

SNHR has documented the killing of seven civilians, including one child and two women. Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:

Damascus suburbs: 4, Latakia: 2, Aleppo: 1



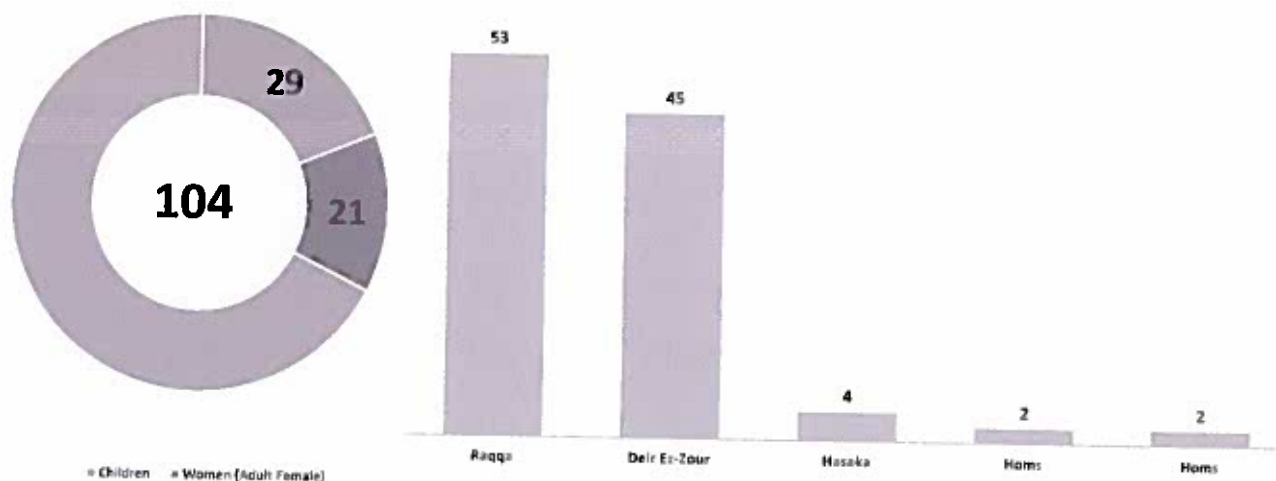
■ Children ■ Women (Adult Female)



F. International coalition forces

We recorded the killing of 104 civilians, including 29 children and 21 women, in bombardments by international coalition forces warplanes.

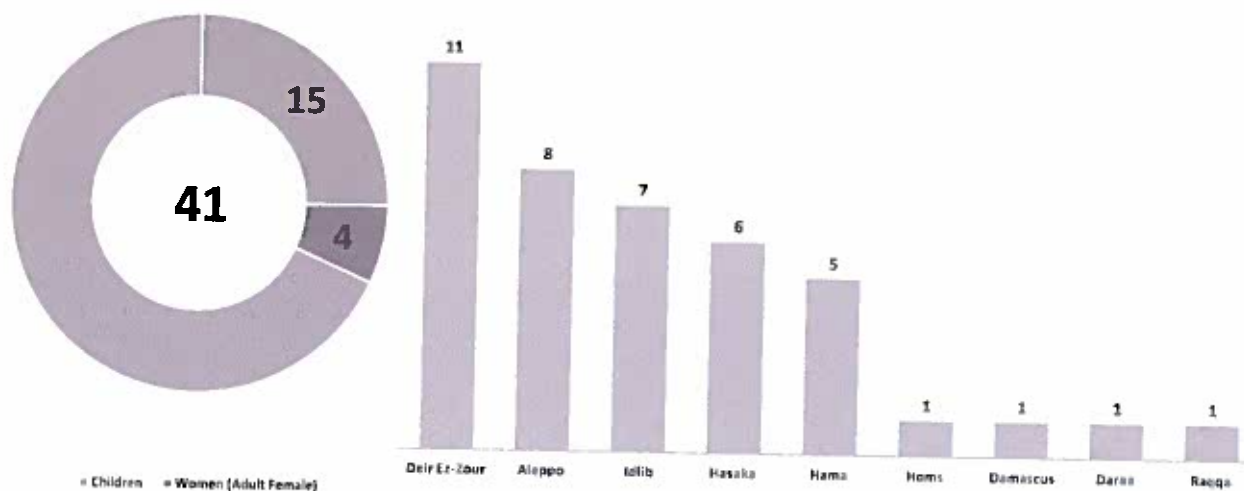
Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:



G. Other parties

We documented the killing of 41 civilians, including 15 children and four women, at the hands of other parties. This category includes bombings that we couldn't identify the group behind them, bullets of unknown sources, landmines of unknown sources, drowning, victims who died in fires, and the indiscriminate bombardment incidents by the Turkish land and air forces, and victims killed by Jordanian and Lebanese forces.

Death toll is distributed across governorates as follows:



We would like to note that this what we were able to document and verify with full names, place, and time through our members who are spread across Syria. It also should be noted that there are many cases that we couldn't access and document especially in the event of massacres where towns are villages are enclosed and communication is cut off which has come to be the case recently in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour governorates, which are the target of vicious military campaigns by the international coalition-backed Syrian Democratic Forces and by the Syrian-Russian alliance, in light of a suffocating siege imposed by ISIS in their areas of control. This suggests that the actual number of civilian deaths is greater. All of this is because the Syrian government bans any human rights organization from working on its grounds.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

1- SNHR affirms that the Syrian-Russian alliance forces have violated the rules of international human rights law which guarantee the right to life.

Evidences and proofs, according to hundreds of eyewitnesses' testimonies, indicate that 90% at least of the widespread and single attacks were directed against civilians and civilian facilities.

All of this discredits the Syrian government's claims that they are fighting "Al-Qaeda and terrorists"

SNHR notes that these incidents of killing constitute crimes against humanity where most of these cases involved the element of widespread or systematic attack against a group of civilian residents.

2- Kurdish Self-management forces have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

3- Extremist Islamic groups have conducted extrajudicial killings as well that constitute war crimes.

4- Some of the armed opposition factions have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

5- International coalition forces have conducted extrajudicial killings that constitute war crimes.

Condemnation and liability

Every internationally unlawful act committed by the state will entail a legal responsibility on that state. Equally, the customary international law states that the state is responsible for all the acts committed by the members of its security and military forces. Consequently, the state is responsible for the unlawful acts, including crimes against humanity, that have been perpetrated by the members of its military and security forces.



Additionally, the Russian regime and all Shiite militias as well as ISIS are all foreign parties who were effectively involved in acts of killings and are all responsible legally and judicially in addition to the funders and supporters of the Syrian regime that is perpetrating massacres systemically and ceaselessly on a daily basis.

Recommendations

The Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps as it has been a year since Resolution 2139 was adopted and no pledges to stop the indiscriminate bombing, which causes daily destruction and killing, have been made.
- Apply pressure on the states that support Syrian regime forces such as Russia, Iran, and Lebanon in order to stop the weaponry and expertise supply for Syrian regime forces as it has been proven that Syrian regime forces have been involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as states and individuals who are supplying extremist groups, the Democratic Union Party, and some of the armed opposition factions.
- The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible must be held accountable.
- Instill security and peace in Syria and implement the principle of Responsibility to Protect in order to save the Syrians' lives, history, and culture, from being destroyed, stolen, and ruined.

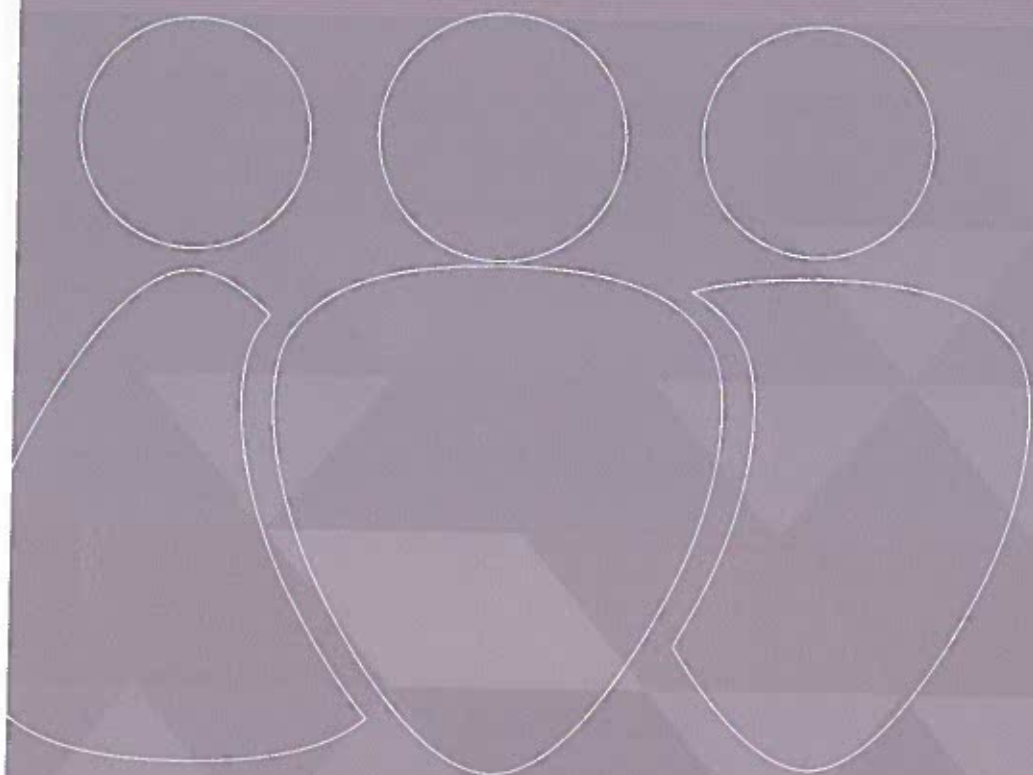
The sponsoring Russian side

- The Syrian regime has to be stopped from dooming the de-escalation agreements. Otherwise, it will only be seen as an exchange of roles between the Russian regime, on one side, and the Syrian/Russian alliance on the other side.
- Start making progress in the detainees issue by revealing the fates of 76,000 forcibly-disappeared persons at the hands of the Syrian regime.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We gratefully thank all the families and local activists who majorly enriched this report with their contribution.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

